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L E T T E R I.

S I R,

**F**ROM the contempt with which you treat all the answers to your last publication, your object is evidently not to discuss, but to inflame—I have in a late publication offered my objections to your principles, and my suspicion of the motives which have induced you to propagate them. I warned my country against the counsels of an Itinerant Patriot, who was wedded to the cause of the French revolutionists, and who well knew

B

that

that confusion in this country would be the the best restorative to the affairs of France. Your letter to Monsieur de la Fayette has confirmed the prudence of that caution.— You inadvertently assure him, that you will labor as fast as you can, and that *France will be in peace and safety when surrounded with revolutions*. I join with you, Sir, in ardent wishes for the re-establishment of order and tranquility in that great empire. I agree with you in thinking, that a convulsion in this country would revive their finances, and tend to restore that peace and safety which they have so severely felt the loss of. But if the shattered fabrick of France can only float upon the wrecks of Britain, I pray God it may perish in the storm !

You deduce, Sir, the great approbation of your book from the rapidity of its circulation. I do not wish to disconcert your vanity, but I wish to undeceive those who may be misled by the argument. Independent of the underhand means which you and your adherents have adopted to encrease its sale,  
your

your profits might have been much greater, had you been the author of a work even less approved. The Newgate Calendar, many of the vilest memoirs, some books of the most paltry scandal, and some of the most infamous libels on morality and religion, have met with more extensive success. An author who teaches mankind that they have no duties, is likely to be much more read than one who acknowledges and enforces the various ties with which we enter into life. The lovers of novelty, the turbulent, the profligate and the discontented, have all been gratified by your maxims, and become purchasers of your publication. The number of copies you have sold, cannot therefore be a matter of surprize; and I trust there are few in this country, wrong-headed enough to construe it into a proof of merit.

So much for your panegyric on your own work. I pass now to your chapter on Society and Civilization. You begin by asserting, that a great part of the order which reigns among mankind, is not the effect of government but of the principles of society.

As it is difficult even to conceive a society existing without a government, I do not well know how to investigate your proposition. I shall confine myself therefore to the consideration of the arguments and instances that you bring forward in its support.

Your arguments are these :

First, that common interest establishes good order. Secondly, that men are naturally attached to society. Thirdly, that for two years after the American war, the several states were without a government. Fourthly, that the riots in England were caused and not suppressed by government ; and, fifthly, that associations of trade are carried on without any interference on the part of government.

First then, it is undoubtedly true, that if every man considered common interest, or indeed his own, he would neither commit riots in the streets, nor depredations of any sort on the property of his neighbours—without an active government, however, these evils

evils would very often occur, and I believe no hungry beggar could be persuaded to forego the contents of the baker's or butcher's shop, on abstract theories of the common interests of society.

Secondly, however strong the natural love of society may be in men, without some better security for their property than the capricious will of the multitude, that natural love would be very soon extinguished. It was probably the eagerness of mankind for the security of government, that led them into the error of despotic monarchies. The necessity of some government soon occurred, and that was the one that they could quickest form,

Thirdly, that America was two years without government is not fact. America was under martial law, the severest of all governments; and besides, it still continued to benefit by the old established forms of government, which could not cease to operate on their habits, the moment they were suspended.

Fourthly, your account of the riots of 1780, is a gross misstatement. The fact was simply this—One class of citizens prejudiced against another, and not at all operated on by the *common interest* of both, was jealous of its approaching advantages, and rose to oppose them. The governing power interfered, and put a stop to contentions that would otherwise have proceeded to the most cruel extremities.

Fifthly, It is so far from true, that trading societies carry on their business, and act merely on the principles of private compact; that not a partnership exists, but is under the sanction of government; and every company in England, is making perpetual applications to the legislature, for the ratification of its private regulations and bye-laws.

The natural love of society, and our common interest, have no doubt a considerable influence on civilized man; but our propensities to evil, and our eagerness to obtain that by force, which we are too idle to earn by industry, have an influence almost equally exten-

extensive. To counteract this, we invest the government under which we live, with the sacred powers of supremacy, and society shews its wisdom, not by the portion it withholds, but by the manner in which it distributes them. You seem to think, that government has no operation but when it actually interferes. In this, however, you manifest your little knowledge of the fact; for once that a law operates in punishing an offender, it operates many hundred times in preventing the crime, and the silent effect of government may be computed in the same proportion.

Your second chapter relates to the origin of the present old governments. You say that the obscurity in which the origin of the present old governments is buried, implies the iniquity and disgrace with which they began. You might just as well say, that the obscurity in which the origin of man is buried, implies the iniquity and disgrace of the creation. I am not now arguing for one species of government or another. I am merely exposing the fallacy of your arguments,



ments, for having detected your design. I am anxious to disarm you of the means of forwarding it. Your ingenious comments on the horrid consequences of monarchical governments, and the train of warfare and cruelty that you derive from them are equally fallacious. The purest democracies that the world ever contained, made war and conquest their trade. The republics of Rome and Carthage, may vie with Nero and Alexander in cruelty and ambition. Jugurtha and Regulus would gladly have changed lots with the captives of the most haughty monarchs. It was not governments but men, that were cruel and imperious. Men must have employment, and before the wide field of commerce was opened to them, war was the only range for their restless disposition. Born in the midst of arms, and educated in camps, booty was their support, and triumph their recreation. But the present age affords a very different prospect. The introduction of commerce into every nation of the world, affords a new occupation for its inhabitants, and a new measure of its comparative greatness. The accumulation of  
capital



capital is found to be the accumulation of strength, and peace is cherished as the tender nurse of its growing power. To wield the capital of a country to the greatest advantage, is become an object of greater importance than the discipline of armies. The people have gradually learnt, that they can enrich themselves without ruining others; and when they have no longer provoked war, governments have no longer pursued conquests. Governments have long been aiming at universal peace, and as soon as men were ripe for the change, they have retired from the direction of the field, to regulate and facilitate commerce, to secure the fruits of private industry, and to encourage the increase of the funds destined for its support. As long as a great part of Europe preserved its martial disposition, that government would have been very ignorant of its duty, that had not kept alive enough of the spirit of war for its defence. It is not in the power of governments to suppress the activity of man. Before commerce was universal, it broke forth in war, and governments were wise to aim at victory. Now  
that

that it pursues the golden allurements of commerce, and that the love of traffic has succeeded to the love of conquests, governments assist us in another way, and protect the harvest of peaceful industry. This is all that we can look for from them, and we may thank commerce for a system of peace, that neither nations nor monarchs could have effected.

Your third chapter opens by observing, “ the contradiction between the principles  
“ of old governments, and the improved  
“ condition to which commerce and civil-  
“ ization can carry society.” I confess that it is by no means matter of surprize to me, that the early governments should have been formed on principles very ill suited to the advanced stages of society ; for that a nation at war with all its neighbours, should require one sort of government, and that a nation trading with all the world should require another, is surely very natural. The great changes which have taken place in the European governments, would not have been at all suitable to the early ages. These changes  
consist

consist in the mode in which the various branches of the sovereign power has been distributed. In the early times, when every day produced battles and struggles, and before specific laws had provided for the infinite variety of human crimes; the urgent calls for immediate succour and prompt justice, placed (perhaps necessarily) the whole authority, legislative and executive, in the monarch's hands. When the system of sudden invasions and internal warfare ceased, the vast authority of kings began to undergo various modifications and restrictions. The powers of legislating were gradually withdrawn from the crown, transferred to an aristocracy, re-assumed by the people at large, or delegated jointly to the three great orders of the state. Such are the changes that have been gradually taking place, according as the various times, countries and circumstances have required them, from the earliest annals of history to the days we live in. In our system, a share of the sovereign power is committed to an hereditary crown; a share to an hereditary aristocracy, and a share to the representatives of the people. In the  
course

course of several centuries, we have seen many experiments in government, but experience has taught us, that no other system can carry a nation by such rapid and steady steps to greatness. Notwithstanding the local advantages, and internal resources of France, the greatest monarchy in Europe : notwithstanding the immense capital of Holland, the richest republic in the world, we have been enabled to withstand both in war, and to rival each in commerce. Not all your wild theory against hereditary crowns, and hereditary nobility, can make us contemplate them with disgust, when practice is so strongly in their favour. We feel them as steady poises in our constitution, that give it weight and dignity. We consider them as pledges for the permanence of our liberty, and antidotes to the daily convulsions to which the republics of all ages have been subject. It is impossible that a form of government should ever occur to which no objection can be started. But with regard to hereditary governments fostering more commotions than those purely elective or representative, you are too well versed in history,

not

not to be conscious of your misrepresentation. There have indeed been some famous disputes in family succession, that have made much noise in history, such as the York and Lancaster disturbances; yet even the claims of those two houses could not be supported with more outrage than the causes of Marius and Sylla. But it is not by a few such violent commotions, that we must estimate the internal discord and misery of a country. The discord that makes a country really wretched, is the never-ceasing discord that prevails in elective governments, where every office of state is the object of daily canvass, and the whole country is separated into different factions animated by jarring interests. In England the power of the crown, and of the house of lords, are subject only to the controul of the laws; but the power of the representatives of the people, is subject to the controul of dismissal. The vast power placed in the hands of the representatives, being thus under the immediate controul of the people, gives us all the security of the purely representative systems; and the appointments of the officers of state being vested

vested in the crown, gives us all the peace and tranquility of the purely hereditary. Had we been thoroughly disgusted with our constitution, the arrival of a stranger from the continent of America to assist in its overthrow, would have been an act of suspicious heroism ; but loving it, and cherishing it as we do, your eagerness to create aversion to it, can only bear the interpretation I have given it.

In your fourth chapter, you come to treat of constitutions ; and in this chapter it is, that you endeavour to collect the most plausible arguments against all the old governments of the world. You derive all governments from the two sources of delegation and assumption, and with a degree of unparalleled assurance, conclude that all governments which you cannot trace to the source of delegation, must be founded on assumption. Nothing can be so full of error and artifice as your assertion, that “ in viewing this subject, the case and circumstances of America present themselves as in the beginning of a world.” The argument you wish to form



form is this—America, like the old world, found itself without a government. America had its free choice of governments, and chose republicanism. The case and circumstances of the old world, were like those of America; if it had had its free choice, it would have chosen republicanism also; the subsisting governments therefore, must have sprung not from delegation but assumption. All this is false. If any two circumstances are dissimilar in the extreme, the origin of government in the old world, and in America, are compleatly so. The great leaders of the affairs of America, who had to deal with a mixt race of people, dispersed over a vast tract of country, were well aware that they could only engage them in their projects, by the number of allurements they could hold out. For this purpose they proposed a system of government, that afforded a prospect of consequence to a vast number of the people—popularity was the great object of every measure that was started, and the necessity of flattering the multitude, impaired the leading features of their constitution. The great influx of light which had  
been

been pouring in for ages from the various sources of knowledge and experience, gave them little cause to fear, that distant empires would leave their domestic concerns to come and embroil theirs. Any form of government was adequate to conduct their affairs for the present, and that which ensured the most applause was the best suited to the moment. The infant societies of the old world, were in a situation quite the reverse, surrounded by wars, engaged in perpetual conflicts, unacquainted with forms of government and their effects, unenlightened by practice or by theory, and not yet disgusted with battle, or softened by intercourse; Vigilance and activity, were the objects of their governments, and they delegated powers suited to the purpose. As times and manners have altered, various reforms and alterations have been adopted in different countries; those that have been most oppressed, have been driven to revolutions; those that have been most impatient have fought them; but those that have best understood mankind, have suffered the reins of monarchy and aristocracy to be gradually relaxed. No wise nation



nation will ever annihilate those orders of its society, which have conducted it with glory through the dangers and difficulties of successive ages. Power can be brought to its proper level, without the precarious expedient of rash revolutions. Those who have applied no other remedy to diseased states than *new-modelled constitutions*, have generally outrun the times, and given poison with their medicine. As far as I know, every nation in the globe that has dismissed its government like its servants, and every government that has treated its people like its slaves, has dashed its existence with broils and convulsions, and either sunk into contempt, or anticipated its destruction. The riches and fertility of the east could not uphold the Asiatic empires against the system of slavery that oppressed them; and Rome, whose government was one day committed to monarchs, another day re-assumed by the people, and another day confided to a perpetual dictator, as suited the fluctuating caprices of the times, lived only to learn, that she had strength enough to vanquish the world, but that she had not steadiness enough to pre-

serve herself. From the abolition of her monarchy to the accession of the emperors, was one constant scene of struggle and confusion. Many times during this period, did she make use of the *boasted prerogative of new forming her constitution*, and just so many stabs did she give to the permanence and security of her government. At length, weary of continually asserting a right that only opened a road to the wild projects of ambitious and designing men, she was reduced to submit to a succession of despots, who have finally consigned her to priestcraft, poverty and oblivion.

The obscurity in which the early periods of all history are involved, makes it impossible to determine, what was the original constitution of any country. Nor is it at all material. In England, for instance, we acknowledge the validity of various rights and prerogatives, though history does not inform us of the time and manner in which they were delegated. When circumstances have made it necessary to alter those rights and  
prero-

prerogatives, we have neither had recourse to the dismissal of our government, or tamely submitted to continue in error. When our governors have infringed on our rights, we have been firm and resolute ; and where the voice of the nation has called for reform, the mild but irresistible influence of public opinion, has given us, by gradual concessions, what others have bought by blood and rebellion. It is because we have understood better than others, the relative duties of people and governors, that we have reaped more than others of the advantages of government. It is from this cause that we have known less than most nations, of the sad vicissitudes of anarchy and despotism ; and it is from this cause, that we have made one even progressive advance to unequalled greatness. By preserving the forms and principles of our constitution with the most sacred care, we establish the conviction of the *security* and *permanence* of our government. It is this security that draws to Britain the capitals of other nations, and that makes the riches and luxuries of the earth flow through the hands of British merchants. It is on

this *wife* and *steady* policy, that we build our happiness, our peace, and our repose ; by adopting it we have rivaled the prosperity of the greatest empires ; and by adhering to it, we shall escape their fate.

You, Sir, are, I know, averſe to every ſyſtem that counteracts the means of repeated revolutions ; it is on this ground that you oppoſe every ſort of inheritance, whether it relates to government or to individuals. Return to your beloved America, and there propagate the new doctrines of your refined philoſophy. TELL THE INDUSTRIOUS FARMER, TOILING TO ENRICH HIS CHILDREN, THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WILL HAVE A RIGHT TO ESTABLISH A NEW CONSTITUTION AND NEW PRINCIPLES OF PROPERTY. WARN THE RICH MERCHANT, WILLING TO ASSIST HIS COUNTRY WITH A LOAN, THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WILL BE AT LIBERTY TO DISSOLVE THE CONTRACT BY WHICH IT WAS OBTAINED. REMIND THE WARRIOR AND THE STATESMAN, EMPLOYED IN FIGHTING THE BATTLES, AND DIRECTING THE COUNSELS OF

HIS COUNTRY, WHOM THE LOVE OF GLORY ONLY PREVENTS FROM INDULGING HIS WISHES FOR RETIREMENT AND REPOSE, THAT HIS HONOURS SHALL PERISH WITH HIMSELF, AND NO TRACES OF HIS DEAR-BOUGHT DISTINCTION SHALL BE VISIBLE IN THE PERSONS OF HIS DESCENDANTS. Go, and contemplate the effects of these kind labours. Restrict our powers and our happiness within the narrowest limits that you can. When both are in their most flourishing condition, God knows on what fleeting bubbles they depend. But it has been reserved for you to render the acquisitions of this world doubly precarious, and to deaden the pursuit of wealth and glory, by extending the tax of mortality from the pursuer to the possession. Tyrants have entailed miseries on particular countries, and mistaken patriots have led them to their ruin; but you aim your blow at a more extended circle. You would banish from the earth the great stimulus to industry and exploit. You would rob youth of its activity, and age of its consolation.

Having now gone through your principal objections to hereditary governments, and shewn that your favourite system of destroying and new modelling them at pleasure, has been the ruin of every nation that has adopted it; I shall take a short view of the plan that you propose for remedying the existing evils of this country. Whether the defect is in your ability or your design, I must leave to the public to judge; but never were projects so replete with mischiefs and with error. But I shall now take my leave for the present, and commit the consideration of this extensive subject to a second letter.

I am, &c. &c.

\* \* \* \*

L E T-

## L E T T E R II.

S I R,

**T**HAT we owe in a great measure to America, the glorious system of peace, that Europe is gradually adopting, is a truth which I believe cannot be controverted ; but we owe it not to its revolution, but to its trade : the vast market which it affords for the produce and manufactures of Europe, has given a spur to the industry of the old world, and brought to maturity the knowledge of the true interests of commercial countries, which had scarcely budded before. As you repeat the erroneous observation of your former chapter, I must repeat my answer to it. You again assert, that the system of war, which has for ages harassed mankind, sprung from the selfish policy of governments. It sprung neither from their artifice nor their intrigues ; it owed its birth to the nature of man, and its continuance



to his ignorance. Man, ever eager to better his situation, took the first means that presented themselves, and before he learnt how to improve his condition, without injury to his neighbours, he did not hesitate to improve it at their expence; the facility with which individuals in the same country could exchange their respective property, soon taught them to prefer traffic to robbery; but the difficulties of carriage and navigation, made it a long while before nations understood their interests as well as individuals. Whilst the power of a nation could only be increased by increase of territory, conquest was equally its aim, whether it followed the counsels of a court, or regulated its own affairs like the Athenians. Governments have had the odium of conducting wars, but it is man that deserves the reproach of creating them; it was the same passion for his own aggrandizement, which now engages him in the lucrative pursuits of traffic, that formerly attached him to the splendid lottery of war. It is this passion that made him always draw the sword with avidity, and sheath it with reluctance; and it was this passion that  
made



made him tear from the bowels of the earth, the cruel implements of battle ; this sad perversion of the gifts of the creation, could only be corrected by a more than human hand ; and it lasted till all-bounteous Providence, which gave us the materials, sent commerce to teach us how to employ them. But commerce was at first very ill understood ; and here again men, more than governments, mistaking the losses of others for their own gains, were to blame. Almost all nations, from their ignorance and jealousy, have petitioned and even compelled governments to forward their commercial interests, by depressing the manufactures and industry of other countries, rather than by encouraging their own ; the great increase of the advantages and importance of commerce, occasioned by the American market, has made its principles more studied and better understood ; in this way also America has had a considerable influence, in restoring harmony to the old world, and in uniting jealous rivals, by the strong ties of common interest : it is a fact somewhat extraordinary, that till long after the trade of America became very  
confi-

considerable, this simple truth, that the riches of surrounding countries promotes the wealth of our own, was never acknowledged; that till within these few years, it was never propagated in theory, and that even now it has scarcely any influence on practice. Was the government of this country to attempt a perfect free trade between England and Ireland, the national clamours would be stronger than those of the French, on the ratification of the commercial treaty. Man is not yet ripe for such great and liberal plans, and those who have to regulate his affairs, must consult his temper; anticipated liberality is the worst of all policies, and the most calculated to prolong prejudice; it is on this principle that I am against all theoretical reformation. Providence has kindly given us an occupation, that unites our interests with our improvement. Commerce is the true corrective of mankind, and by pursuing it, we shall gradually exterminate the wretched remains of ignorance and error. I shall conclude my reflections on this head, by adopting for once your own expressions.

“ In

“ \* In contemplating the whole of this sub-  
 “ ject, I extend my views into the depart-  
 “ ment of commerce. In all my publica-  
 “ tions, where the matter would admit, I  
 “ have been an advocate for commerce, be-  
 “ cause I am a friend to its effects; it is a  
 “ pacific system, operating to cordialize  
 “ mankind, by rendering nations, as well  
 “ as individuals, useful to each other,—as  
 “ to mere theoretical reformation, I have never  
 “ preached it up,—the most effectual process  
 “ is, that of improving the condition of  
 “ man by means of his interest, and it is on  
 “ this ground that I make my stand.”

I cannot in the same manner adopt the  
 next commercial position that you lay down.  
 You say, that † *a nation cannot be buyer and  
 seller of her own merchandize, and that the  
 power to buy must reside without herself.*—No-  
 thing can be more remote from fact than  
 this: in the traffic that is carried on between  
 the farmer and the manufacturer, the great  
 basis and support of the whole fabrick of

\* Rights of Man, second Part, page 82.

† Rights of Man, second Part, page 83, line 19.

trade, the power of buying and selling both reside within the nation. Foreign commerce is pursued, not from its being necessary that the purchaser of our commodities should be a foreign country, but from the impossibility of buying the articles which they sell us in our own : if Yorkshire could furnish us with teas, and other counties with wine and raw silk, the trade of Canton and of Bourdeaux would have but little influence on our prosperity ; we should never frequent their markets ; the wealth of China is a case in point, and is a practical exposition of your mistake ; foreign commerce has indeed supplied it with the great instrument of circulation, but its vast riches, which it has preserved longer than any nation of the globe, were wholly accumulated by internal commerce, and not one particle by foreign commerce, which it has ever despised and neglected. That the present increase of our commerce is in no respect owing to the regulations of government, is another assertion that I shall contradict, with as much steadiness, and a good deal more truth, than you affirm it : the effects of the commercial treaty  
have

have been too much and too recently felt in this country to be forgot ; the effects of the union in Scotland, are as well known, and the encreasing prosperity of that country equals that of America. Your comparison between the increasing trade of England and of America, can only lead to fallacious conclusions, and is, I suppose, designed to imply the superior happiness of America. But a country thinly inhabited, with abundance of fertile land and convenient harbours, must at \* first necessarily make more rapid advances in wealth, than a country fully peopled and already rich in the extreme. The comparison, however, absurd as it is, served your purpose ; it seemed to indicate a defect in government at home, and that was all you aimed at. I shall not argue with you on your position relative to the balance of trade. I have no doubt in my own mind, of the accuracy of Mr. Pitt's statement, yet as I was not present at his speech upon the subject, I will not enter into the discussion. But that the real wealth of Britain has in-

\* Smith's Wealth of Nations.

creased,

creased, and continues to increase in the most rapid manner, is a fact on which there are not two opinions. I shall conclude these observations on your commercial tenets, with a few remarks on your projects for the reduction of all the navies of Europe \*. “ The  
 “ idea of having navies for the protection of  
 “ commerce, is delusive. It is putting the  
 “ means of destruction for the means of  
 “ protection. Commerce needs no other  
 “ protection than the reciprocal interest  
 “ which every nation feels in supporting it;  
 “ it is common stock; it exists by a balance  
 “ of advantages to all, &c.” From a man who never preaches up *theoretical reforms*, we could not well expect a project that had less connection with *practice*. The fleets of Britain, Holland, France, Russia, and Spain, are all to be burnt; those of Portugal and Sweden are to add to the brilliant conflagration, and Mr. Paine is to be surety to Europe, that the forests of America shall never float upon the ocean, and dictate to us the terms on which she chooses us to trade with

\* Rights of Man, second Part, page 88.



her, and with each other. He who is so little versed in human nature, as to think that men could live without governments, will take upon himself to announce, that among the many provinces of that vast continent, notwithstanding the variety of character that different habits and climates must create, notwithstanding the various revolutions they may undergo, not one of them will ever be liable to the errors of former states, not one of them will ever be blinded by the same infirmities, or animated by the same ambition. He will ensure to us, that the equity of Europe will quietly leave us in possession of the India trade, as a recompence for the expences we have incurred by the maintenance of our eastern dominions. He will guard us from the combinations of the private pirates of European countries, and defend us from the piratical nations of Africa. He will be responsible, that Sweden and Norway, and those neighbouring countries that nature has endowed with abundance of those productions which would enable them to rebuild their navy, would not be ungenerous enough to do so, when we could no longer  
pre-

prevent them ; or if all these assurances did not perfectly quiet our fears, he would, with a magic wand, annihilate fleets and forests together. With these few remarks I leave the public to contemplate the plan of this *practical reformist*. As I do not feel inclined to dwell on your pretensions to political fame and consequence, or to take the trouble of comparing your account of your outset in life, with the account that has \* lately been published of it, I pass directly to your observations on corporations. You who so often make a difficulty where none exists, and overlook one entirely where others see the greatest, cannot surprize me by the great difficulty you find in tracing corporations to their origin. After the fall of the Roman Empire, many of the principal towns in Europe were chiefly inhabited by artists and traders, who were nearly in the same state of servitude and oppression, with the occupiers of land in the country. The barbarous habits of those days, made it essential for the common defence, that the whole country

\* Life of Thomas Pain.

should



should be prepared to take the field, and that military subordination should pervade every branch of society. Whenever the country was respited from war and insurrection, the farmers returned to the plough, and these traders travelled from place to place, disposing of their goods at different fairs and villages. But even this infant traffic was checked by the arbitrary taxes with which it was loaded, by tolls on the passage of certain bridges, and fines for the liberty of erecting booths, &c. &c. Some particular traders, and afterwards towns, obtained grants of exemption from these taxes, in consideration of a fixed annual fine to the king; and with these exemptions they usually obtained charters for erecting them into corporate bodies, with magistrates of their own, with independent laws and discipline, and various other important acquisitions. At the time, therefore, that these charters were granted, they did not confer privileges on the burghers at the expence of any other class of men. The burghers were indeed the first, whose rights and liberties were restored, and the first who reaped the advantages of approaching civiliza-

D

zation ;

zation ; till then the rights of citizens had been lost in the servitude of soldiers, and the charms of independence had been banished by the necessity of discipline. Their emancipation was, besides, the first dawn of light on the commercial interests of this country, the first measure that protected trade against plunder, and the origin of that vast fabrick of commerce, with which the greatness of Britain is interwoven.

I have now traced corporations to their rise, and as you have laid it down as a maxim, that governments have never served trade, I have endeavoured to shew, how essentially they did so, by the institution in question. As to the privilege of corporations in sending representatives to parliament, it is a subject more intricate and important. There are, however, but two grounds on which it can be argued ; on the ground of policy, and on the ground of rights. I have never, I confess, thoroughly understood the ground of rights. It appears to me, to be a mere theoretical one, on which no nation ever builds its practice. On the ground of  
rights,

rights, I do not see why the right of voting should not extend to a free-born beggar. Certainly the French system of limiting the right of voting, to those free-born subjects who contribute to the state taxes equal to the value of three days labor, is founded not on rights, but on policy. I should be glad to know, in what *code of rights* it is to be found, that the value of *three days labor*, should confer a right of voting more than the value of *two*; of *two* more than of *one*; of *one* more than of *half a one*. The fact is, that it is a restriction founded merely upon *policy*, and when this is once established, it is evident that it becomes a subject of national enquiry, to be discussed and decided on principles of policy. The English nation, therefore, that restricts the number of its voters, somewhat more than the French nation, does not assume any new or extraordinary power, but only exercises the same unalienable branch of national authority, in a manner somewhat different. On the ground of rights, therefore, this matter cannot be argued, and on the ground of policy, it has already been supported by much abler hands.

Having already met your arguments on the subject of the house of peers, I shall now only take notice of a new observation that you make upon it. It is, you say, a combination of persons in a common interest, and therefore you think it an institution injurious to the state. To this I answer, that there can be no grounds for a conclusion so alarming. It is, perhaps, the only set of individuals in the kingdom, who must always forward the interests of the country, by pursuing their own. The merchant, the married man, the stockholder, the officers in both the military lines, may all have temporary interests, widely different from the interest of the nation. But the interests of the \* landlord, always in unison with the interests of the country, can only be promoted and secured by the same measures. The high price of his land, and the flourishing condition of his estate, is the true barometer of national prosperity. His affluence is grafted on his country's wealth. With it, it thrives, and with it, it expires. From

\* Wealth of Nations.

an institution composed of such members, we have nothing to dread, and every thing to hope; and we can never regret having placed a portion of the legislative authority in the hands of guardians, whose interests and affections must be for ever united to serve us.

There now only remains to be noticed, your indecent abuse of the crown, before I come to the financial part of your treatise; but as you only attack it with loose and general invective, it is unnecessary to enter into a detail of the advantages which flow from it. I shall content myself with reminding you of the security and stability that we derive from it, and of the miseries that prevailed during the short time that it was abolished.

So much for your doctrines relative to commerce and to government. Let us now take a cursory view of your projects of finance. I shall dwell only on the principal objects of your speculation.



The first object that you attempt, is to make it appear, that the system of taxation, and the burdens of the people, tended to the rapid decrease of one fourth, during the first four centuries from the conquest, and held a directly opposite course during the remaining three. To establish this proposition, you produce \* two tables of the taxes during those two periods, in which you simply state their amount at the close of each century; and without supporting the accuracy of the various sums, by any calculations of your own, you refer your readers to Sir John Sinclair, and ground the whole statement on his authority. I have searched Sir John Sin-

\* Table I. Rights of Man, part 2, page 109.

Annual amount of taxes levied by William			
the Conqueror, beginning in (1066)			£ 400,000
Annual amount of taxes levied at one hundred years from the conquest (1166)			
			200,000
Ditto in 1266	-	-	150,000
Ditto in 1366	-	-	130,000
Ditto in 1466	-	-	100,000

Table II. Page 110.

Ditto in 1566	-	-	500,000
Ditto in 1666	-	-	1,800,000
Ditto in 1791	-	-	17,000,000

clair's

clair's History of the public Revenue with great attention, but find nothing that supports the very first fact which you bring forward, namely, that William the Conqueror levied taxes to the amount of 400,000*l*. Sir John Sinclair indeed says, that the whole income of the crown arising from its extensive domains, and from occasional taxes, exactions, and voluntary contributions, produced a nett revenue of 400,000*l*. in William's reign ; but the taxes afforded but a small part of this revenue, and the burdens of the people were never lighter than in that reign. The tax of Danegeld, the only heavy or permanent one then subsisting, though it had, on great emergencies, occasionally risen from one to six shillings per hide of land, could not even at that highest rate, have produced a sixth part of the sovereign's income. The same confusion of rents, gifts, exactions, and taxes, prevails throughout your other statements, but it is enough that I have pointed out your error in the first instance. With regard to the course of taxation during these four centuries, the fact is, that as the crown lands were gradually alie-

nated, and the system of extortion, as well as some of those lucrative prerogatives of the crown, which were founded on the feudal system, were by degrees abolished ; the losses that the crown thereby sustained, were proportionably repaired by increase of taxation. Whatever therefore may have been the state of the income of the sovereign, and whatever fluctuations it may have undergone during that period, the annual amount of the taxes was constantly increasing, and probably in a very rapid manner. Had even your statement of the taxes been the true one, the decrease of taxation from century to century, would have been an unsound inference. You state, for instance, that the taxes in 1366, amounted to 130,000*l.* and the taxes in 1466, to 100,000*l.* and conclude therefore, without further consideration, that taxation had decreased from 1366 to 1466. But we must not compute the value of a tax by the number of metal pieces paid into the coffers of the Treasury, but by the ability it gives government to command labor and provisions. Towards the conclusion of the fourth century from the conquest, (about  
1470)



1470) the average price of the quarter of wheat was about ten shillings of our present money; in the preceding century, it was about twenty shillings per quarter. A hundred thousand pounds therefore contributed to government in 1466, would have given it as great a command over labor and provisions, as two hundred thousand pounds in 1366, and of course a greater than one hundred and thirty thousand; or in other words, 100,000l. in 1466, would have been equivalent to a greater quantity of the real wealth of the country, that is, to a greater quantity of the produce of its labor, than 130,000l. would have been equivalent to in 1366, and of course would have been a greater tax.

I now proceed to your statement of the taxes in 1566, 1666, and 1791. You state the amount of the taxes in 1566, at 500,000l. and in 1666, at 1,800,000l. and from thence infer an enormous increase in taxation. I shall first endeavor to shew, that this conclusion cannot be drawn even from your own premises; and next, that the premises on which you have founded it, are inaccurate.

rate. We have already seen, that the average price of wheat per quarter, at the close of the fifteenth century, was about ten shillings, and it continued so till 1570, or 1571; four or five years subsequent to the period at which you state the amount of the taxes to have been 500,000*l.* but the great influx of precious metals, from the new and fertile mines of America, which had taken place between 1590 and 1666, raised the money price of wheat per quarter, from ten to forty, and even forty-one shillings. In 1566, therefore, 500,000*l.* could command as great a quantity of labor and necessaries, as 2,000,000*l.* could in 1666; so that the nation, though it parted with money to the amount of 1,800,000*l.* in 1666, did not part with so great a quantity of its real wealth, or incur so great and burdensome a tax, as if it had parted with 500,000*l.* in 1566. Taking then the facts as you state them, it would follow, that the taxes had decreased in this century; but as I have reason to think, that you somewhat \* exaggerate the amount of

\* History of the Public Revenues of Great Britain, page 135.

the revenues in 1566, the real state of the case is, I believe, that the taxes were in some degree greater in 1666 than at the former period; and here I cannot help observing with what caution you pass over the only period in which the expences of this country were really and unnecessarily enormous. I allude to that interval between the governments of the two Charles's, when the kingdom was converted into a common-wealth; its expences, during that change, exceeded belief; notwithstanding the declension of commerce from the past troubles, and of course the impoverished state of the national resources, the expenditure of the country was more than quadrupled\*. During the nineteen years of the Common-Wealth, it raised by taxes, sales, and other means, the enormous sum of eighty-three millions, three hundred and thirty-one thousand, one hundred and ninety-eight pounds; and Crom-

\* Charles the First's Revenue was about 895,819*l*. Hist. Rev. p. 167; and the Common-Wealth Revenues, 4,385,850*l*. History of Public Revenues, p. 177.

well,

well, notwithstanding, left a considerable debt.

I come now to the last article in your statement, the 17,000,000*l.* with which it closes. It must be evident to every body, that you present this vast increase of taxation to convey a false idea of a proportionably increasing expence in government; if this had not been your object; you would not so industriously have confounded the interest of our debt with the national expenditure. As the rise and progress of funded debt is a subject much too extensive for this or any letter, I shall confine myself to a few general remarks on the present striking increase of taxes. Setting aside then the interest of our funded and unfunded debt, which absorbs nearly two thirds of the national income, the remainder is no doubt a greater sum than ever was before granted for the annual support of government; but this is not to be attributed to the profusion of government, but to the natural progress of wealth and luxury: the expences of governments must necessarily bear some proportion to the expences

pences of individuals. Consult the various perpetual annuities, which were considered when they were given as an ample provision for the persons in whose favour they were granted, and you will find them in the present age ridiculously incompetent to the original design. The same may be said of the sums formerly destined to support fleets and armies, and all their attendant expences. Within this last century, the expenditure in every rank of society has been inconceivably augmented, and government has by no means exceeded its proportion: the encrease of the personal expences of the Crown may be fairly supported on the same grounds. Besides, when we granted it an annual sum, in return for the lucrative privileges with which it parted, we should have dealt very unfairly by the sovereign, if we had intended to preclude the possibility of ever increasing it: that would have been taking from him an income that would have been always increasing, and giving him in exchange one that must have been always stationary. I shall only add, in addition to this, that in an improved



proved and flourishing country like ours, whilst every class of citizens is daily augmenting its possessions and embellishing them, it would be ungenerous in the extreme to wish that the sovereign should be the only member of the society excluded from the enjoyment and advantages of increasing luxury and expence. The learned and well-informed author of the *Wealth of Nations* coincides precisely in this opinion, and to him I refer those who wish for more extensive information on these subjects.

The next object that presents itself in your financial system, is your proposal to reduce the whole peace establishment to 1,500,000*l.* a sum considerably smaller than the peace establishment of two centuries ago ; but as this calculation is formed on the romantic notion of destroying our navy and subverting our constitution, I shall not enter further into the subject. Besides, I should have great difficulties to encounter : the expence of building fleets is well known, but the expence that might be incurred by destroying them,

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is such unbeaten ground, that I know not how to compute it. I will, however, endeavour to make myself master of this ingenious speculation, and when I have collected the requisite information, and procured an estimate of Wat Tyler's monument, and the other extraordinaries of the year, I will meet you again on what may be a competent provision for the public services.

There now only remains for consideration, first, your scheme for abolishing the poor rates; secondly, your plan for supplying their place; and thirdly, your project for converting the commutation-tax into a progressive land-tax. I shall speak to these three points in order, and with as much conciseness as the subject will admit of.

On the first, I shall merely say, that if the poor are to have a provision made for them out of the superfluities of the rich, it is not easy to conceive a more effective mode of accomplishing this humane object, than by making none but the affluent contribute;

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and making them contribute according to their abilities.

The second object, namely, your plan for supplying the place of the poor rates, destroys I think one of the principal benefits of the system you would supersede. According to the present institution, the whole of what is thought necessary for the relief of the poor, is assessed upon the rich, according to their different abilities ; but according to your plan of providing for them out of the taxes, the contribution would be levied indiscriminately, on all ranks and conditions ; in this case, therefore, the rich would contribute a part only, instead of the whole of it ; and that part which would be taken from the poor, to return to the poor again, would return to them reduced by the deductions of collection and distribution : the revenue and parish officers would be the only gainers : this would be a very round-about mode of relieving the poor ; it would be first adding to their natural poverty, by the increased poverty arising from oppressive taxes, and then providing for both together. I will now consider it in

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another point of view : let us suppose, that the country, from its flourishing condition, is enabled to reduce its income, the point in question is, whether it is more advantageous to take off a portion of the taxes, or to suppress the poor rates, and give the poor an \* equivalent out of the surplus taxes ? If you suppress the poor rates, and give the poor only two millions out of the surplus taxes, it is evident that the relief to the country is partial : the rich save that portion of the two millions of taxes, that the poor contribute towards them ; and the poor are in precisely the same situation ; they part daily with the same quantity of money, for the various articles that they daily consume, and they receive no additional relief ; but if you suffer the poor rates to remain as they are, and take off taxes to the amount of two mil-

\* I say an equivalent, because it is only in that way that the real merits of the case can be argued. It would certainly be more profitable for the poor, to receive four millions than two ; but if such an increase of provision was necessary, it could just as well be effected through the medium of assessed rates ; it is on the means of relief, and not on the quantity which may be requisite, that I am arguing.

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lions on candles, and such other articles as fall heavy upon the poor, you would relieve the poor of a great portion of their taxes, and relieve the rich also. Besides this, when you take off taxes from consumable articles, the poor do not merely gain at the end of the year, the difference of price arising from the diminution of the tax ; but as they have every day something less to pay for their candles, \* malt, &c. they have every day something more to spare for the purchase of wool, or such other raw articles, as they can add value to by their labor. A poor manufacturer, who had taxes to the amount of three pounds a year remitted to him, would be much more effectually relieved, than one that received a pension of six pounds a year. Every day would leave in his pocket, that part of the price of his provisions, and raw materials, &c. which would otherwise have

\* I mention malt, because no class brews beer for its own consumption, more than the labouring poor in this country, which controverts your fact of the tax on beer brewed for sale, falling partially on the poor. The rich, who often live in London, when there, always buy their beer. The poor, who live all the year in one place, brew almost universally for themselves.

been

been resolvable into taxes. It is true, that the sum total of his daily savings, would at the close of the year, amount only to half his pension ; but if we consider the number of times, between January and December, that the savings of the first and second weeks, (and the others in proportion) have gone from him to purchase raw materials, and returned to him with increase, in the price of the manufactured commodity, we shall see that the rapid accumulation of profits to which the original saving gave birth, will at the end of the twelve months, produce a sum much more considerable than the pension. This is a fact, which relates to the whole body of poor. In every family, there are manufacturers ; and if the husband is at the plough, the wife and children are spinning the wool that they have bought out of their savings, to re-sell with a profit. The same may be argued, if a necessity existed for increasing the provision for the poor to 4,000,000*l.* and that there were 4,000,000*l.* of surplus taxes to dispose of ; if you abolished the poor rates, and appropriated the

4,000,000*l.* surplus taxes to the poor, \* the rich would gain 2,000,000*l.* and the poor 2,000,000*l.* But if you left the poor rates, and by a judicious abolition of the four millions of surplus taxes, you could save the poor † 400,000*l.* per annum, you would save the rich 3,600,000*l.* Increase the poor rates 1,000,000*l.* a year, the rich would remain gainers of 2,600,000*l.* instead of 2,000,000*l.* and the poor would gain 1,000,000*l.* in direct contribution, and a daily saving of above a 1000*l.* which would be a rapidly increasing fund, and a much greater support than another million of direct contribution paid to them in yearly sums of ten pounds, and six pounds, and twenty shillings, on births and marriages, according to your system.

\* By the rich, I mean those who contribute to the poor rates; by the poor, those who do not; there cannot be any body omitted in such a division.

† I say 400,000*l.* because I said 200,000*l.* when I was considering an abolition of 2,000,000*l.* taxes; but one, two, three, four, or five hundred thousand, would answer my purpose just as well; it is mere supposition, in order to carry on the argument.

But

But there are other arguments in favour of the abolition of taxes, and against the abolition of poor rates, and which, if it was otherwise matter of indifference, would be of themselves conclusive. By the abolition of poor rates, you would encrease the revenues of the rich, and so far as that goes, you would encrease the price of commodities by increasing their consumption; but by an abolition of taxes you would materially lower the price of all commodities, by lowering the price of provisions and of labour. We should therefore be enabled to undersell foreign nations to a much greater amount than we can now; our exports would increase rapidly, and we should thereby provide in the best possible manner for our poor, by affording a vast addition of employment to the industrious.

Before I quit this subject, I must say a few words on your scheme for providing for the labouring poor by fixed and regular annuities, that at certain \* periods of their

\* From fifty upwards, the annuity increasing at sixty.  
life

life are to become their right of course. I think an annuity of 6l. or 10l. a year, merely because a man happens to have been born fifty or sixty years, would tend to make both him and his children idle; and I think that among the 140,000 poor that you mean to provide for in this way, scarcely any will, at that early time of life, be unable to labour from infirmities, and that therefore it is unjust to expect such a contribution from the wealthy and industrious.

It strikes me besides, that by adopting this measure, the market price of labour would be encreased by a double operation, and that commerce would thereby receive a check, independent of the wound occasioned by keeping up taxes (which might otherwise be abolished) in order to carry this plan into execution. The market price of labour would be increased, by thus giving a certain provision to 140,000 labouring members of society; first, because they would all, on that account, become more indifferent to whether they obtained employment, and of course more exorbitant in the terms on which they would  
accept



accept it ; and, secondly, because a great number of the 140,000 would naturally be induced to waste a considerable portion of their time in idleness, and the supply of labor being thereby diminished, whilst the demand for it continued the same, the industrious would be enabled to raise their wages as well as the indolent. I shall now quit this subject, on which I have been induced to dwell considerably from its intricacy. I have endeavoured to shew, first, that your mode of relieving the poor would be a very round-about one ; secondly, that it would be by no means an effective one, considering the magnitude of the sum ; thirdly, that it would be very injurious to commerce, by leaving the whole load of taxes on provisions and commodities, whilst it so essentially relieved revenues ; and fourth, that it gave a check to commerce (independent of the one just mentioned) by occasioning a rise of wages.

The third and last point which I proposed considering, was your project for converting the commutation tax into a progressive land-tax.

tax. Such a measure would give a mortal stab to commerce and prosperity. Agriculture, the great and fertile source out of which the luxuries of all ages have been purchased and supplied, would, by its adoption, be robbed at one blow, of all its advantages. The only employment of capital, which is always lucrative, and the returns of which are uniformly certain ; the only employment of capital in which nature assists us to accumulate our gains, would be for ever barren of all profits. The proprietor of 10,000*l.* a year, who by laying out 10,000*l.* could raise his estate to 11,000*l.* a year, would incur an additional tax of 400*l.* per annum, and of course never undertake the improvement ; the proprietor of 11,000*l.* a year, who by laying out 10,000*l.* could raise his estate to 12,000*l.* a year, would incur an additional tax of 450*l.* per annum, and therefore find the improvement still less practicable. The proprietor of 23,000*l.* a year, who by raising his estate to 24,000*l.* a year, would incur an additional tax of 1000*l.* per annum ; for that, and every increasing thousand, would not lay out five pounds, if he could double its produce.

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In every smaller estate, the tax operates in a similar manner, though in a less proportion ; It gives therefore a decided check to the progress of improvement ; it operates as a heavy fine upon the employments of small capitals in agriculture and improvement, and it amounts to a prohibition of great ones.

As one of your great objects is to throw upon the landholders the whole weight of the commutation tax, in order to bring the balance of burthens to its proper level, I must say a few words on the proportion of taxes, which the landholders already pay. Besides their share of all taxes on articles of consumption, besides the land-tax, their share of the poor rates, commutation tax, &c. there is one very important national expence, which is levied solely upon land ; I mean the maintenance of the clergy. Tythes, the heaviest of all burdens, because something of the nature of your progressive tax, falls on the landholder alone ; compute then his shares of the taxes that all contribute to, and add the amount of those that he only pays, and you will see how outrageously unjust, would

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be the new burden that you propose to lay upon him.

Having now shewn the baneful influence of this tax on agriculture and commerce, and offered my objections to it as a matter of equity, I shall now conclude with a very few observations on its political effects.

In this point of view, one of its most immediate consequences would be, the extermination of the influence of men of property. This is indeed one of the great effects that you wish it to produce ; but I think it is an effect, that would in the end, be found prejudicial in the extreme to the interests of this country. There are but two sets of men in society, who have a great and natural influence over its inferior classes. These are the landholder and the merchant. The proprietor of land, has necessarily great weight with his tenantry ; and the merchant, with the number of artificers and manufacturers, to whom his capital affords employment and subsistence. The interest that the merchant has amongst this extensive set of people, it  
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is not in the power of any human institution to suppress. The interest of the landholder may, indeed, be thoroughly extirpated; and would be so by your system, of forcing landed property into such small subdivisions. But to effect a similar subdivision of mercantile capital, would be absolutely impracticable. To what a deplorable situation then, would your project reduce a country! It is a fact fully established, that the interest of the proprietor of land, is always the same with the interest of the country, though the interest of the merchant is often widely different. You would therefore leave the influence, that might be injurious in its full vigor, and wholly extirpate the one that must ever be beneficial. But this striking error in your plan, owes its existence to your principles. Your system is to *destroy*; and where evils could not be radically abolished, you have always forgot, that they might possibly be counterbalanced.

I shall now conclude this long letter, in consideration of you and of the public. Whether or not the rest of Europe may ever  
adopt

adopt your measures, I sincerely hope that they never may be encouraged in this country. When hereditary honors, and hereditary property die, the stockholder's existence hangs but by a single thread. If we can tear from the true descendants, the titles and estates which their ancestors purchased with lives of toil and hardship ; if we can dissolve the terms on which our fore-fathers have bequeathed their property, we cannot be bound by the conditions of their debt.

I am, &c. &c.

London, March 2, 1792.

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